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BRITISH CARTOGRAPHY OF THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The fondness displayed by the British in the eighteenth century for stereotyping phrases and manners can be matched by their acceptance of stereotyped maps of a somewhat unknown country just then coming into their possession: North America west of the Alleghenies. Up to the middle of the century British interest in the West was conspicuously weak. The literature descriptive of the country which was read in England was chiefly the writings of the old French explorers. Though these were full of ridiculous inaccuracies they proved immensely popular and circulated in English translations even after British exploration had gained much more complete information.

The maps of the western country produced in England before the middle of the eighteenth century were only feebly suggestive of the region which they claimed to portray and showed practically no originality. For that reason the maps of the great French cartographers, the Delisles and D'Anville, were not superseded and remained very popular as standard maps of America both in the originals and in translation. When the English engraver went so far as to make alterations to suit himself in order that he might attach his own name to the production the result was likely to be a jumble of more inaccuracies than the original itself could boast. Even when English geographers had revolutionized English knowledge there was a tendency to use the old French norms for popular publication, though they had been in the meantime discarded by the French as well as the leading English map makers.¹

In the earlier years of the eighteenth century the superiority of French over British knowledge was particularly evident in the treatment of the lake region with which the British were not at first hand acquainted. Even their later maps which drew upon original information for the course of the Ohio river used

¹ *Gentleman's magazine* (1763), 33: 284.

the old French outlines for the lakes in one of the two characteristic forms which had been developed by the French cartographers of the early eighteenth century from the accounts of the first explorers of the region. Of these the list is headed by the Delisles, father and son, who achieved a great reputation in the first quarter of the century. Their maps of *Amérique Septentrionale* were published at Paris in various prints before 1729 and their *Carte de la Louisiane et du cours du Mississippi* which appeared first at Paris in 1703 was published in amended form at several later dates.² If the *Carte d'Amérique* of Guillaume Delisle, published in 1722, seems crude, it has but to be compared with *Le Canada ou Nouvelle France . . . et le cours de la rivière de Misisipi par N. de Fer, géographe de monseig. le dauphin* (Paris, 1705), a map rightly belonging to the seventeenth century, to show what rapid progress in map making had taken place in twenty years. The mouth of the Mississippi had found its proper location and was no longer on the western coast of the gulf. The Wabash and the Ohio rivers were no longer parallel, flowing into the Mississippi two hundred miles apart, although the naming and relationship of the two rivers were still confused, for the Ohio was represented as a tributary of the Wabash. The length of the lower Mississippi was much better appreciated. As for the lakes, one sees in Fer and Delisle suggestions of the two norms developed later by D'Anville and Bellin respectively. *Amplissimae regionis Mississippi . . . nova tabula* by Jean Baptist Homann³ (c. 1730) was a mere perversion of a Delisle map. Its publication in Nuremberg gives an idea of the broad popularity which the maps of the latter enjoyed.

Reference has already been made to the two great French cartographers of the mid-eighteenth century, Bellin and D'Anville. Of these the latter was by far the more famous, "having gained the name of being the first to raise geography to the dignity of an exact science."⁴ In the case of conflicting reports his own judgment was brought to bear on the problem and later surveys verified his selection repeatedly. While his *Carte de la Louisiane; dressée en 1732, publiée en 1752* still confused the

² J. Winsor, *Narrative and critical history of America* (Boston, 1889), 5. 81.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

Ohio and the Wabash, representing them as a single river, his *Amérique Septentrionale* of 1746 gave them in their proper relation. Good evidence of the popularity of the D'Anville maps is the number of reprints which were made, either frankly copied or plagiarized, and appearing in both French and English. Such is *Canada et Louisiane par le s^r le Rouge ingenieur geographe du roy*, 1755, and the same may be said of as late a one as *États-Unis de l'Amérique Septentrionale*, 1785; *supplément à l'atlas de M. Robert de Vaugondi*. Across the channel many bore the D'Anville stamp. A new map of the whole continent of America which appeared in London in 1786 was "compiled from Mr. d'Anville's maps of that Continent," according to the frank statement of its publisher, Sayer. More than thirty years before this date the D'Anville map was popularized in the *Gentleman's magazine* (1754) where it was called *A map of the British American plantations extending from Boston in New England to Georgia*. . . by Eman: Bowen geogr^r to his majesty. Many other English prints of the D'Anville map are in existence.

Parallel to the work of D'Anville is that of Nicholas Bellin, "Hydrographer of the Marine," who succeeded even earlier than D'Anville in tracing the course of the Ohio with approximate accuracy. It was he who was responsible for the drawings for the *Nouvelle France* of Charlevoix, published in 1744, and his maps were used by Washington in 1753 when, though ten years old, they were better than anything which the English had produced.⁵ A new and accurate map of Louisiana with part of Florida and Canada. . . by Eman. Bowen (no date) is an English reproduction, only half translated, which Bowen frankly attributes to Bellin as his authority. By attaching his name to both D'Anville and Bellin maps Bowen showed how far he was from being an original cartographer, "geographer to His Majesty" though he claimed to be. The *Gentleman's magazine* for 1762 prints a map on Bellin lines called *An accurate map of the British empire in North America as settled by the preliminaries in 1762*.⁶

To Bellin and D'Anville respectively must be attributed the

⁵ J. Winsor, *Mississippi basin* (Boston and New York, 1898), 306.

⁶ *Gentleman's magazine* (1762), 32: 603.

development of the two norms for the great lakes which appear depicted in one extreme form or the other in almost all English and French maps of the second half of the eighteenth century. In fact these old norms disappeared only after the United States surveys established the true outlines of the lakes which are a curious compromise between those of the two old forms. Bellin's norm can best be seen in his *Carte des lacs du Canada* drawn for the *Journal* of Charlevoix. Here appears a bulky lake Superior, well stocked with large islands, a rounded lake Michigan, extending slightly northwest and southeast, and an oval lake Erie, lying due east and west. In contradistinction to this the D'Anville lakes present a more normal lake Superior, a pointed lake Michigan and a curiously irregular lake Erie lying northeast and southwest. The Bellin norm was included in every detail in John Mitchell's great English map of 1755; the D'Anville outlines were reproduced in the map of Ellis Huske which appeared in the same year.⁷

As a cartographer and writer of distinction the name of Le Page du Pratz should here be mentioned, but the map which appeared in his *Histoire de la Louisiane* (1757) and was reproduced in English translation in the *Gentleman's magazine* for 1763 was years behind the date. No map of so late a period had a right to show Lahonton's "long river," or to represent the Ohio and the Wabash as one stream. An effort was made by the English translator to remedy matters by applying the name "Ohio" to the river in its whole course, removing the "Ouabache" from its lower waters, but no Wabash river was anywhere supplied.⁸

So far there has been considered merely the more important French maps of the eighteenth century which were freely copied into English; but the authors of a few early English maps have been given credit for more or less originality as cartographers. Of these the first place is taken by Hermann Moll, a Dutchman who came to London about 1698 and acquired a great reputation for the excellence of his English maps.⁹ His *New and exact*

⁷ Reproduced in E. Channing, *A history of the United States* (New York and London, 1907-1912), 2: 556. The shape of lake Erie is slightly modified.

⁸ It is curious that the *Gentleman's magazine* published this map in 1763 when it had already, in 1754 and 1755, given much better ones to the public. A slightly better one appeared later in the year.

⁹ *Dictionary of national biography*.

map of the dominions of the king of Great Britain in the continent of North America appeared in 1715 and showed how far the English were behind the French in information. Although he attributed to Delisle much of his *New map of the north parts of America*, published in 1720-1729, his work was far inferior to the Delisle maps of the same date. The great lakes are grotesque and the Ohio is called the Ouabach or St. Jerome river. In spite of its glaring faults the Moll map was used by Templeman in computing his survey of the globe.¹⁰

Though Moll's name is met often, the standard English cartographer of the mid-eighteenth century was Henry Popple whose *Map of the British empire in America with the French and Spanish settlements adjacent thereto* was issued in London, in twenty sheets, under the patronage of the lords of trade in 1732, and was reissued in 1733 and 1740.¹¹ Yet this map was based largely on Delisle and displayed little knowledge beyond that which the French had had fifteen years earlier. In spite of this the map was a standard and was not surpassed by any original work for twenty years. The *Gentleman's magazine* for June, 1754, in giving the account of Major Washington's "journey from Williamsburg to the French Fort near the Lake Erie in Virginia," remarked that "the reader may consult Mr. Pople's map of North America, for the situation of the several places above mentioned."¹²

In 1755 British map making was revolutionized by the issue of two maps, one on either side of the Atlantic, which combined with a certain amount of old French information much that was new and essentially British. These were the map of John Mitchell and that of Lewis Evans and both came into existence as a result of the intense interest in the American frontier which the approach of the French and Indian war produced, particularly the heated controversy over the French and British claims to the territory beyond the mountains. While the same period produced numerous other maps these two gained unusual popu-

¹⁰ John Mitchell, *The present state of Great Britain and North America, with regard to agriculture, population, trade, and manufactures, impartially considered* (London, 1767), 115.

¹¹ Winsor, *Narrative and critical history*, 5: 81.

¹² *Gentleman's magazine* (1754), 24: 255, n.; B. Franklin, *Writings* (Smyth ed. — New York, 1907), 2: 297, 355. Cf. B. Fernow, *The Ohio valley in colonial days* (Albany, 1890).

larity. Mitchell was a botanist who is said to have come to America early in the century and lived in Virginia, at Urbanna on the Rappahannock river, about seventy miles from Richmond. Just before 1750 he returned to England and published some material of a scientific nature as well as his American map, for which he was rewarded by being made a member of the Royal Society.¹³ The map itself which bears the title *A map of the British and French dominions in North America with the roads, distances, limits and extent of the settlements* was published by the author February 13, 1755. It was undertaken, Pownall tells us, at the request of the board of trade, and was drawn largely from charts and surveys which had been made recently on the order of the lords of trade by the governors of the various colonies.¹⁴ A high compliment to the map is given by Smith, the New York historian, who said of it: "Dr. Mitchell's is the only authentic one extant. None of the rest concerning America have passed under the examination or received the sanction of any public board, and they generally copy the French."¹⁵ In the correspondence of Andrew Johnston, president of the council of proprietors of East New Jersey, is a letter to Dr. Mitchell, mentioning a very slight error which he has made in marking the boundaries of the province, but employing most flattering terms in speaking of the map as a whole. "Upon perusing your late excellent map of the British dominions in the continent of North America," he begins, and concludes with the statement that "nothing but a high sense of the weight given to your map by your own character and the general approbation of the Lords of Trade, would have engaged us to have taken the trouble of writing this letter."¹⁶ The general excellence of the map caused its immediate popularity on both sides of the Atlan-

¹³ *Dictionary of national biography*.

¹⁴ "This map was undertaken with the approbation & at the request of the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations; and is chiefly composed from Draughts, Charts and Actual Surveys of different parts of His Majesties Colonies and Plantations in America: Great part of which have been lately taken by their Lordships Orders, and transmitted to this Office by the Governors of the said Colonies." Inscription on the map, signed by Thomas Pownall, secretary, plantation office, February 13, 1755.

¹⁵ William Smith, *History of the province of New York*, quoted in Winsor, *Narrative and critical history*, 5: 83.

¹⁶ *Gentleman's magazine* (1756), 26: 287.

tic. It was often quoted in boundary negotiations and was reproduced in numerous reprints, large and small, in England and on the continent. That it lost Mitchell's name in the process is not surprising or is it extraordinary that in several instances the prominence of an engraver's name has occasionally detracted from the honor due the original author.

Some instances of its reprinting may be of interest. On the continent it was reengraved at Amsterdam by Covens and Mortier. *Partie de l'Amérique Septentrionale qui comprend le cours de l'Ohio la N^{lle} Angleterre, la N^{lle} York, le New Jersey, la Pensylvanie, le Maryland la Virginie, la Caroline, par le s^r Robert de Vaugondy géographe ordinaire du roi* is a French translation appearing in the same year as the original and showing many curious misreadings of English names. Glastenbury appears as Glasoenbury and Hatfield as Halfield. I. Palairret's *Carte des possessions angloises & françoises du continent de l'Amérique Septentrionale* of 1759 shows Mitchell's outlines again. There were many later reproductions with "additions and corrections" in both French and German. In England the *Gentleman's magazine* popularized Mitchell's map by presenting a simplified reproduction in the very year of its publication, giving it the title *A map of the British and French settlements in North America*; the *American gazetteer*, London, 1762, included it in its third volume with the title *A new and accurate map of the provinces of Pensilvania, Virginia, Maryland and New Jersey*, while the *Annual register* for 1763 placed it in its appendix with the title *A new map of the British dominions in North America with the limits of the governments annexed thereto by the treaty of peace and settled by proclamation Oct. 7, 1763; engraved by T. Kitchin, geog.* It may also be found in Charlevoix's *Voyage* (Dublin, 1766), where it is entitled *A map of the British dominions in North America settled by the late treaty of peace, 1763*. The Kitchin print which first appeared with the title *A new and accurate map of the British dominions in America according to the treaty of 1763* was a popular one and was used in Captain John Knox's *An historical journal of the campaigns in North America* (London, 1769). Bowen's adaptation of Mitchell is called *An accurate map of North America describing and distinguishing the British Spanish and*

French dominions in this great continent, according to the definitive treaty concluded at Paris 10th Feb. 1763.

The position of such men as Bowen, Kitchin, and Jefferys in relation to map making needs some explanation. Eman Bowen was a map engraver to George III and Louis XV and he possessed the happy faculty in his American work of presenting the best which the period offered, calmly affixing his name to Bellin, D'Anville, or Mitchell maps as it struck his fancy.¹⁷ Thomas Kitchin was a mere map publisher who displayed his eighteenth century unscrupulousness in copying whatever pleased him, ignoring the name of his authority. Thomas Jefferys' habits were much like those of Kitchin, but though starting as a mere map engraver at Charing Cross he rose to the position of geographer to the Prince of Wales, afterwards George III.¹⁸

The original Mitchell map, including the author's name, went through several editions between 1755 and 1774. In its "second state" the author engraved ten columns of closely printed descriptive text in the Atlantic ocean. Here he described the sources of his information and the names of the surveyors of the various parts of the country. Decided changes were made in places in the outlines and some points were altered more than a degree. In the "third state" important changes were made in boundary lines. As the third edition bears the signature of Jefferys and Faden as its publishers it cannot be earlier than 1773. Though Jefferys died in 1771 the business was carried on, and not until 1773 did the firm become Jefferys and Faden.¹⁹ In 1775 the title of the map was altered so that the second line read "The British Colonies" instead of "The British and French Dominions," but no more alterations were made in the map itself.

The Mitchell map was in use for almost fifty years. One existing print has the outlines of the proposed colony of Vandalia carefully marked. Of far greater importance is the fact that the Mitchell outlines became the basis for the discussions leading up to the proclamation of 1763,²⁰ and for the treaty of Ver-

¹⁷ *Dictionary of national biography.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Manuscript letters from Henry Stevens of London to Clarence W. Alvord, Urbana, Illinois.

²⁰ *Report on Canadian archives*, 1907, no. 18, p. 103, n.

sailles (1783).²¹ In the work of John Adams the Mitchell map figured constantly.²²

The second important map of 1755 is of special interest on this side of the Atlantic because it was the work of an American and was published in Philadelphia. *A general map of the middle British colonies, in America, viz Virginia, Mariland, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. . . by Lewis Evans* appeared in the early summer of the year and was followed by the *Analysis* of the map in August.²³ It was based, as far as the West was concerned, on surveys made by Gist, Walker, and various other recent explorers²⁴ and was hurried in its publication in order to be of use in Braddock's expedition. Evans was himself a personal friend of Benjamin Franklin and the map was early in Franklin's possession. In the very year of its publication he sent a copy to Jared Eliot²⁵ and eleven years later, when giving to Shelburne the proposals for the Illinois scheme with letters from George Croghan and Sir William Johnson on the subject, he accompanied them with a small-scale Evans map on which he had marked the boundaries of the proposed colony.²⁶ In America it was a general favorite and was for a long time accepted as the standard authority for settling boundaries and purchases.²⁷ While less famous in England it had a curious history there and went through various editions. It was first pirated by Kitchin,

²¹ C. C. Baldwin, *Early maps of Ohio and the West* (Cleveland, 1875), 15.

²² J. Adams, *Works* (C. F. Adams ed. — Boston, 1850-1856), 8: 20, 210, 392, 398, 518, 519.

²³ Lewis Evans, *Geographical, historical, political, philosophical, and mechanical essays, number II* (London, 1756), 24; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 17, 1755, no. 1386; July 24, 1755, no. 1387; *New York Gazette or Weekly Post Boy*, August 18, 1755, quoted in *New Jersey archives*, 1st ser., v. 19, "Newspaper extracts," v. 3.

²⁴ Lewis Evans, *Geographical, historical, political, philosophical, and mechanical essays; the first containing an analysis of a general map of the middle British colonies in America . . .* (Philadelphia, 1755), 10; T. Pownall, *A topographical description of such parts of North America as are contained in the (annexed) map of the middle British colonies* (London, 1776), preface.

²⁵ "I send you one of Evans's new maps, which I imagine will be agreeable to you. Please to accept it." Franklin to Jared Eliot, August 31, 1755. Franklin, *Writings* (Smyth ed.), 2: 412.

²⁶ Franklin to his son, September 27, 1766, *ibid.*, 4: 139; Winsor, *Mississippi basin*, 38.

²⁷ H. N. Stevens, *Lewis Evans, his map of the middle British colonies in America* (London, 1905), 6, 21; Pownall, *Topographical description*, preface; *Documentary history of New York*, 1: 587.

then by Jefferys and others, and was printed often with more or less inaccuracy. When the map had first appeared in 1755 it bore a dedication to Thomas Pownall, who had become acquainted with Evans in Philadelphia, though rumor has accused him of obtaining the dedication "for a valuable consideration."²⁸ In his *Topographical description* he called the Jefferys reproduction badly done and republished the map under the title *A map of the middle British colonies in North America; first published by Mr. Lewis Evans of Philadelphia in 1755; and since corrected and improved. . . by T. Pownall . . .* but the older inaccurate plates persistently reappeared.²⁹ In spite of difficulties of this sort the Evans charts may be given high ranking. To Evans, Mitchell, or D'Anville may be traced the best large-scale maps in English published in the two decades following 1755.³⁰

Such was the general development of British cartography of the Mississippi and Ohio valleys up to the American revolution, covering therefore the years of the British claim to the country. While many minor variations characterize the various maps under consideration, there are certain general misconceptions belonging to all which had an important bearing on the history of the country between 1748 and 1775. Even a cursory examination of the eighteenth century maps of the Mississippi valley shows that in practically all of them the distance between lake Michigan and the Mississippi is much greater than is actually the case. Mitchell's Mississippi has a definitely southeasterly direction in its whole upper course, thus making the Illinois country very broad at the north; other maps, while giving the river its proper curve, place the lake too far to the east so that a similar result is obtained. The Illinois country is therefore made to appear much larger than is actually the case. Another inaccuracy is in the misplacing of the Ohio. The explorer and geographer not only failed to give the river its great bend around the south-

²⁸ *Massachusetts historical collections*, 1st ser., 7: 136.

²⁹ Stevens, *Lewis Evans, his map*, 11 et seq. See map no. 4, in *The American military pocket atlas*, published by R. Sayer and J. Bennett, 1776.

³⁰ One well known adaptation of D'Anville is *North America from the French of Mr. D'Anville improved with the back settlements of Virginia and course of Ohio*, published in 1755 by Thomas Jefferys. There were several later prints of this map by other publishers. The same strong D'Anville influence appears in *A new and accurate map of North America . . . humbly inscribed to the Honorable Charles Townshend by Ellis Huske*, also published in 1755.

ern side of the present state of Ohio but they were also guilty of underestimating greatly the distance between the Ohio and lake Erie. Contemporary descriptive texts support this view. We are told that "Presq' Isle, on the banks of Lake Erie" is "distant from Du Quesne about 90 miles."³¹ Again we read of "the river Ohio, which is navigable 1000 miles farther (above the Mississippi), some say 1500, nigh to its source, not far from Lake Ontario in New York."³²

The constant repetition of these misconceptions gave the public a somewhat distorted view of the country. Most of the first-hand information in regard to the West which reached the eastern seaboard came from the forks of the Ohio, but the supposed extent of the far western country had a real effect on the imaginations of many persons who were interested in the future of the great valleys. The period between 1748 and 1775 was full of colonial schemes, but of these astonishingly few were concerned with the country lying between the Ohio and lake Erie and all the most ambitious among them were planned for the country of the Illinois.

In summarizing these suggestions on the cartography of the West it may be stated once more that until the opening of the seven years war British interest and British exploration in the West had been so limited that there was in existence no good English map based on original surveys. It may be further pointed out that the maps printed in English before this date were therefore obliged to be slavish copies or incorrect alterations of French originals and that in the main the English engravers showed very little keenness in their choice of foreign maps to reproduce, holding often to older outlines which the French had already discarded. With the outbreak of the war however two excellent maps of British authorship appeared, while at the same time a number of English engravers and printers set themselves the task of making the best possible use of these and of the best French charts in their possession. Such success was attained in the decade following 1755 that in many re-

³¹ *Gentleman's magazine* (1755), 25: 378. The actual distance between lake Erie and the Ohio river proper at its nearest point is eighty-five miles, but the average distance is very much greater.

³² *Ibid.* (1763), 33: 285. Some of these statements are not untrue for the Allegheny.

spects the maps of this period were not superseded until the time of United States surveys at the close of the century.

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